

January 30, 2023

The Honorable Rob Nosse, House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem OR 97301

Dear Chair Nosse and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

Thank you for taking up the issue of opioid harm reduction and HB 2395. We are grateful for the continued work to create a comprehensive package that addresses the opioid crisis impacting communities across Oregon. Kaiser Permanente supports this effort to improve access to proven tools that help prevent opioid overdoses and save lives.

Kaiser Permanente has served Oregon and Southwest Washington for over 70 years and we provide both coverage and medical care to more than 663,000 members in our service areas. As the nation's largest private integrated health care system, Kaiser Permanente is working to tackle the opioid crisis using a holistic approach that encompasses clinician education and support, community protection, patient safety, and patient education.¹

We support changes to state law that improve access to short-acting opioid antagonists, fentanyl test strips and other testing equipment to help reduce the risk of drug overdoses. Oregon has seen unintentional opioid overdose deaths steadily increase from 2019 to 2021.² Advancing prevention and mitigating against overdose are critically important steps in preserving life and addressing this public health emergency. These are necessary tools in a multi-faceted approach to treat substance use disorders.

Acting urgently to address current barriers to harm reduction efforts will help prevent future unintentional opioid overdose deaths. We thank Rep. Dexter for her leadership and support moving forward with comprehensive legislation to tackle this complex and growing crisis.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Edwards
Director, Government Relations
Kaiser Permanente Northwest

¹ Kaiser Permanente Institute for Health Policy, "Integrated Care Stories: Pain Management and the Opioid Epidemic," <https://www.kpihp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Integrated-Care-Story-Opioids.pdf>, May 2022.

² Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division, "Opioids and the Ongoing Drug Overdose Crisis in Oregon," https://sharesystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2479_22.pdf, 2022.